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ABSTRACT

A study sought to determine what factors and events have influenced the occupational behavior patterns of 1977-1978 Pennsylvania home economics education graduates. The study examined how women graduates of the traditionally female field of home economics education have experienced labor force participation over the past 10 years. Home economics education has suffered the largest decline and has the largest percentage of females within the educational field. As a result, the difficulty in recruiting qualified home economics teachers in Pennsylvania may result in program elimination. Using triangulation of methodologies, archival information, document questionnaires, and interviews, data were analyzed to identify occupational influences. Data were examined in three phases: (1) the transition of the Pennsylvania public educational system; (2) the transition of the Pennsylvania home economics education field; and (3) the occupational behavior patterns of Pennsylvania home economics graduates. An examination of phase one and two data, collected from archives and an open-ended survey, revealed a decline in enrollments, programs, and numbers of teachers teaching during this time period. Phase three data were collected from a mailed follow-up survey with an overall response rate of 56.9%. Among the respondents, 69% lived in Pennsylvania and were included in the final sample (N=128). Several factors were found to have influenced behavioral patterns: marital status, education, family status, age, the oversupply of graduates in 1978, the 1982 recession, deteriorating statewide economy, and loss of state leadership in home economics education. (30 references) (NLA)

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FACTORS AND EVENTS THAT INFLUENCED THE OCCUPATIONAL BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF 1978-1988 PENNSYLVANIA HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION GRADUATES

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I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Pennsylvania Home Economics Association for inviting me to return to Pennsylvania to present my research findings. I would also like to present a copy of my dissertation to PHEA for their encouragement of my research via awarding me the PHEA graduate scholarship in 1988. Today, I am here to present the findings of this, my doctoral research.

The purpose for this research came out of an interest to explore the occupational experiences of home economic education graduates of Pennsylvania colleges and universities between 1978 and 1988. The specific purpose of this study was to search for clues to factors and events that may have influenced the occupational behavior patterns of these women. Data for this study were drawn from archival data, documents, questionnaires, and interview data analysis to sort out leads to these factors and events. This study proposed to answer the following research question: What factors and events have influenced the occupational behavior patterns of 1978-1988 Pennsylvania home economics education graduates?

An examination of the background to this study revealed that the effects of changing labor force participation of women on traditionally female fields over the past 20 years has had an impact on these fields. They are undergoing transitions to adapt to the changing social order. This study examined how women graduates of the traditionally female field of home economics education have experienced labor force participation over the past 10 years. Today, some are beginning to question

the value of the home economics education major in higher education in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Council on vocational Education, 1987; Zubritzky, 1988) and across the nation (Kellett, 1989).

Within the field of education, home economics education has suffered the largest decline with approximately twice the drop in enrollment as compared to that of other fields in education (Khanna, 1989). Home economics education also has the highest percentage of females within the fields of education (Khanna, 1988).

The number of home economics education graduates in Pennsylvania has declined rapidly in the last ten years with a 92% reduction in the number of persons initially certified to teach home economics (Khanna, 1989). The difficulty in recruiting qualified teachers to fill available positions in vocational home economics education in Pennsylvania may result in the elimination of these programs altogether. Pennsylvania is in a crisis situation in regard to the numbers of those graduating in home economics education and those entering and remaining in teaching positions in Pennsylvania. Despite potentials for shortages of home economics teachers, "[T]oday many junior high and high school home economics teacher faced with decreasing enrollments fear that their programs and careers will be terminated due in part to reductions in the federal budget for vocational education, especially consumer and homemaking" (Dagenais, 1987, p. 129).

This study used a triangulation of methodologies to examine the occupational behavior patterns of a female majority field in Pennsylvania as it underwent changes. Women's occupational development theory was used to provide a theoretical framework for analysis of the elements of home economics education graduates' occupational behavior patterns. Particular attention was paid to factors and events that seemed to have the greatest influence on labor force participation of the women in this study. The tools selected for the inquiry reflect the researcher's beliefs, informed and directed by others' research, about the territory most appropriate to probe. According to Fitzgerald and Betz (1983) and Fitzgerald and Crites (1981), there is a lack of comprehensive conceptualizations or theories that are capable of producing meaningful, testable hypotheses regarding the development of women's occupational behavior.

In reviewing the literature, one finds a great deal of attention paid to the work lives of women in "nontraditional careers" or "pioneer" fields as if those who choose these merit more study due to their being "unusual" (Almquist & Angrist, 1970; Epstein, 1972). These studies and others have contributed to the argument for the need for gender-differenced occupational development theories and assumptions; however, their generalizations to most women, who are mostly women in "traditional" fields, are limited. According to Lortie (1975), research is needed about women in traditionally female fields. Theories of occupational development have been generated by men

(Psathas, 1968; Super, 1957), about men and for men. The need for differential occupational development theories for men and women has become more widely proclaimed (Fitzgerald, & Crites, 1981).

Data obtained for this study were taken in three phases. Phase one examined the transition of the Pennsylvania public educational system from 1978 through 1988. Sources of data reviewed included archival data and documents related to the Pennsylvania educational system during this time period. Phase two examined the transition of the Pennsylvania home economics education field from 1978 through 1988. Sources of data reviewed included archival data and documents related to the Pennsylvania's home economics education field during this time period. Phase two also utilized an open-ended survey of the leaders of home economics education in Pennsylvania during this time period to explore what changes had occurred. Phase three examined the occupational behavior patterns of the Pennsylvania home economics education graduates during this time period. Phase three utilized a mailed survey to determine demographic factors and actual occupational patterns of 1978 to 1988 Pennsylvania home economics education graduates. This final phase also used selected telephone interviews of home economics education graduate form the sample of those surveyed.

An examination of phase one and phase two data reveal that the field of home economics education has indeed changed. A number of trends were observed from these data and documents. First, there have been declines in enrollments, programs,

number of teachers prepared and number of teachers teaching during this time period. The field of home economics education has seen declines in the supply of teachers, programs and enrollments of programs in Pennsylvania between 1978 through 1988. However, there have been dramatic enrollment increases in postsecondary and adult occupational home economics programs. Reasons for the declines at the secondary level could be linked to changes in the population of the state, with fewer high school aged students, declines in these enrollments should be expected. On the other hand, college enrollments for women have gone up, while collegiate home economics education enrollments have gone down.

The final phase of data collection used a mailed follow-up survey with an overall response rate of 56.9%. Of those who responded and were included in the final sample, 69% (n = 128) live in Pennsylvania currently, with 30.4% (n = 56) living outside of Pennsylvania. Of those residing outside of Pennsylvania, it was found that they lived in 23 other states.

Of the usable responses, 33.2% of the sample subjects graduated from a private college, 19% graduated from a state-related university and the majority (47.85) graduated from a state-owned university.

The overwhelming majority of the subjects in the sample were Caucasian (97.3%). Minority representation was limited to African-Americans representing only 1.6% of the sample. This

lack of minority representation was similar to earlier findings by Jorgenson, Scruggs, Green, Brink, and Ward (1983) and Fanslow (1980).

The respondents ranged in age from 24 years to 61 years, with a mean age of 32.35 years and a modal age of 31 years. The traditional age range for college students is thought to be 18 years to 22 years. In this sample, 13.6% of the sample was not in that age range at the time of graduation from college. This distribution indicated an older student population, similar to that predicted by Hall and Miller (1989) for home economics education majors.

The majority of the respondents in the sample were married (69.6%) with about one-fourth (26.1%) being single and only 1.1% being separated or divorced. The number of women separated or divorced was much smaller or about one-tenth of the national figures reported by Shank (1988).

Most respondents had one or more children, with one respondent having five children. Forty-three percent of the persons in the sample had one or two children. Those with children had children who ranged in age, at the time of the study, from 7 days to 31 years, with the majority (25%) having children one to two years old. If more than one child was present, the mean age of the oldest child was 3.094 and the mean age of the youngest child was 1.319.

Thirty-seven percent of the sample have not taken any advanced education since completing their bachelor's degree in home economics education. Of the advanced coursework taken,

50% fell into the following field categories: education (10.3%); elementary education (5.9%); computer science (5.9%); nutrition, dietetics and food science (5.9%); home economics education (5.4%); counseling (3.5%); child development/early childhood (3%); education administration (3%); and adult education (3%), and the balance were in 16 other fields.

Of those taking advanced coursework, they were found to have attended the following educational institutions: state-owned university (29.4%), private colleges (21.6%), state-related university (19%), out-of-state college or university (13.7%), intermediate unit (6.5%), community college/technical institute (3.3%), vocational-technical school adult program (5.9%), and other (.6%).

The mean number of credits taken by this group since receiving their bachelor's degrees was 14.522 credits. Of those taking additional credits, 16.8% obtained a master's degree, 7.1% were working towards permanent certification, 6% were working towards a master's degree, 4% took enough credits to obtain permanent certification, 3.8% were taking non-degree credits or received additional certification, 16% were working towards additional certification, and 1.1% were working towards a doctorate.

The majority (40.8%) of the sample had not obtained any certifications since graduation, while 19.8% and 12.3%, respectively, had obtained either permanent Instructional II Pennsylvania home economics teacher certification or a temporary Instructional I home economics teaching certificate. Only

9.2% of the sample were certified home economists; 6.5% were registered dieticians, and 1.5% held school administrator certification. Overall, respondents held a mean of 1.2 certifications per person.

Most (27.7%) of the sample earned between $20,001 per year and $25,000 per year, with an overall mean for the group falling in the $15,001 to $20,00 range. The modal salary of between $20,000 and $25,000 is approximately 85% of the state's median income for dual income families in 1984 (Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, 1987) and below the state's 1986 state average salary for teachers (PDE, 1988).

Thirty-two percent of the sample were currently employed as a home economics teacher, while another 16.3% were employed in other teaching areas or areas related to education. Some (10.8%) were in administrative positions, approximately 13% worked in business and industry, and 12.5% were full-time homemakers (not in the workforce for pay). Of those currently working, the majority (59.9%) were employed in educational institutions, while 26.1% were employed by business and industry, 10.3% were employed in human service agencies, and 3.7% were self-employed.

The majority (64.7%) were working 36 hours per week or more with only 6.5% working half-time (20 or less hours per week). Many (38%) were employed all year. However, the mode (41.9%) for the group was nine to ten months per year. This was probably due to the large numbers of those who are employed as teachers.

After an examination of the scriptive data on the sample, the sample was then sorted into mutually exclusive occupational patterns of employed, non-interrupted-continuous or homemaking-interrupted. If employed, the subjects were then sorted further by level of labor force participation since graduation (by hours worked per week and months worked per year). Six occupational behavior patterns were evident as follows:

1. Full-time Pattern - Full-time continuously employed of nine months or more per year and 35 or more hours per week.

2. Increased Pattern - Increased level of labor force participation from part-time to full-time employment.

3. Decreased Pattern - Decreased level of employment from full-time to part-time employment.

4. Part-time Pattern - Continuous part-time employment of less than 35 hours per week and/or less than than nine months per year.

5. Varied Pattern - Varied pattern of a combination of full-time and part-time employment.

6. Interrupted Pattern - Leaving paid employment or never working for pay outside the home.

Most (87%) of the sample were employed outside of the home and fell into the following occupational behavior patterns: 56%, full-time pattern; 11.4%, increased pattern; 10%, decreased pattern; 4%, part-time pattern; 4%, varied pattern; and 13% were in the interrupted pattern. Data was then further examined for relationships between occupational behavior patterns and institution of graduation, year of graduation,

race, age, marital and family status, education and credentials, income, number of jobs, written comments made on the survey instrument, and data obtained from telephone interviews.

Despite many changes in the educational system of Pennsylvania during this period, and changes in the field of home economics education, these women have fared very well in the labor force. Based on a sample of 184 home economics education graduates surveyed, most (87%) have been in the work force since graduation from college with few being underemployed, and if they became unemployed another position was found immediately. The proportion found to be in the labor force was similar to 1984 findings of a national follow-up of home economics graduates (Braddock & Hecker, 1988).

These college educated women have been situated for professional employment by appropriate "facilitating conditions" (Sobol, 1963), of education and work experience but whose job market had suffered a decline of those in the work force since graduation, five patterns of occupational behavior were found and one pattern was found for those women who interrupted their work lives for full-time homemaking. These patterns were developed based on the number of hours worked per week and the numbers of months worked per year.

Several factors appeared to have influenced the occupational behavior patterns of home economics education graduates between 1978-1988. These factors included marital status, education, and family status, which also appeared to be highly related. Those subjects in the interrupted pattern were most

likely not to have taken additional coursework beyond the bachelor's degree, were married and have the largest number of children and the youngest children. Those subjects in the increased and varied patterns were the least likely to have children and the most likely to have taken additional coursework; however, they were about a likely to be married as those in the other patterns. Marital status appeared to be highly interrelated with level of advanced education, number of children and ages of children for those who were in the interrupted pattern in particular. These findings are consistent with the literature for family status (Stolzenberg & Waite, 1981) and education (Perun & Giele, 1982; Wolfson, 1972; Vetter, 1980; Houseknecht & Spainer, 1980).

Age may have had a confounding affect on the occupational behavior patterns as these women tended to be slightly older than the typical college student woman's expected age of 22 at the time of graduation, particularly in 1982, 1986, and 1987. This older student population of recent graduates may help account, in part, for the 100% full-time employment pattern experienced by recent graduates. The finding of the older age for typical college graduates was consistent with Hall and Miller's (1989) observations and the observations reported by the Pennsylvania Home Economics Teacher Educators (1988).

Of all the events occurring over this time period, the oversupply of home economics graduates (1978-1980) and the 1982 economic recession appear to have a greater impact on this group of women's occupational behavior patterns. Between 1978

and 1979 there was a leveling followed by a decline in the number of persons employed with home economics education degrees. Following this decline period, full-time employment peaked and then declined dramatically in 1982. These patterns were evident from both the survey data and PDE data and differed from patterns observed for Pennsylvania teachers in general.

The reporting of economic necessity as the factor by all interviewees for their rationale or influence for work was consistent with Sobol (1963), Rosenfeld and Perella (1965), and Hoffman (1963). The economic recession of 1982 also appears to be interrelated with public enrollment trends in vocational home economics programs, changes in the funding of consumer and homemaking education programs, patterns in the number of persons employed as full-time vocational home economics teachers, and the number of vocational home economics programs. This framework of interwoven factors in the environment as influencing the occupational behavior of women fits the theoretical models proposed by Vondracek, Learner, Schulenberg, 1986), Mednick (1982), Sobol (1963), and Perun and Giele (1982) for examining women's occupational behavior.

Summary

The findings of this study point to the effects of a deteriorating statewide economy as being associated with changes in funding for education, increased regulations for teacher certification, and decreased numbers of teachers during the 1978 to 1988 period. At this same time, the loss of state leadership for home economics education has created additional confusion and turmoil for those in the field. Recent graduates entering the field have responded by pursuing full-time teaching positions and assuming a strong orientation towards employment in positions related to the field or requiring a college education. Some deterioration of morale among these graduates was observable in their comments regarding their expectations for the future of their field--which may be due to the loss of leadership for the field of home economics education in the state.

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